



# *Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors*

## *Supervisor Patricia Jursik, District 8*

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### **SUPERVISOR JURSIK: MILWAUKEE COUNTY RESIDENTS NOT WELL-REPRESENTED IN ARENA FINANCING PLAN**

***“A rose, by any other name, is still a rose”***

Supervisor Patricia Jursik issued the following statement on the arena deal passed by the Legislature Tuesday:

“There is a clear consensus that property taxes are the most over-burdened tax county residents must bear against the backdrop of years of deprived support for our parks, culture and transit services, among others. With the purported reason that property taxes are maxed-out, County Executive Chris Abele saddled more property taxes on the backs of Milwaukee County residents, and only Milwaukee County residents, to fund the arena deal. Never mind that a likely majority of users come from the surrounding counties, but only Milwaukee County will pay with the property tax -- not a sales tax, not a sin tax, not a user fee, but a property tax.

“Even the media has failed to fairly report this tax. The County Executive, as the chief architect of the county contribution, has hidden the property tax payment behind euphemisms like “debt collection” or “bad debt” or “reduced shared revenue.” Any of these euphemisms lead to increased property taxes. The county currently uses about \$3.5 million of debt collection to largely off-set property taxes. If you divert these resources for payment of arena debt, there is a hole to fill in the budget. State shared revenue supposedly pays the county for state mandated services. Unless the state removes these mandates, and they have not, the county must provide the service and increase the property tax. A property tax by any other name, is still a property tax.

“To add insult to injury, the rules of the game were changed mid-course. Imagine giving additional fouls to the star player of the Milwaukee Bucks at half-time so that the home team hero virtually fouls out before the second half. This is what the state legislators did to Milwaukee County residents. The home team is comprised of elected supervisors, 18 players. By the second half, the review of the Park East land sale, the out-of-county majority state legislators benched Milwaukee County’s team from review of land sales.

“Even worse, the team had already held a full public hearing and played the first half without fouls. The June 2015 Economic Development Committee (ECD), reviewed the Park East land sale in which the management of the Bucks fully participated and at all times were respectful to the game rules called ‘good faith negotiations.’ At half time, the ECD committee took their normal break and specifically requested that the County Executive come and participate in the second half. A formal letter was even sent and served  
<https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=3858861&GUID=7A0E7B5B-898C-497B-92BC-3ED19F896484>.

“By the second half, the July ECD committee reconvened to complete review, but the state, at the behest of the County Executive, handed out fouls removing the representation of citizens (whom the home team represents) that actually pay the property taxes from review of land sales. The rules had changed, and good faith negotiations became bad faith on behalf of county citizens and their right to fair representation for fair taxation.

“By the way, County Executive Chris Abele never showed up at the July ECD committee in spite of the formal letter request. He took his ball and went home.”

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